

Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC)

Minutes of May 17, 2011

Attendance: David Weitzer, Drew Stabler, Patrick Brown, Jane Evans, Eddie Kuhlman, Ben Allnutt, Linda Lewis, Gary Marx, Woody Woodroof, Gene Walker

Guests: Lois Stoner, Ann Sturm

Staff: Jeremy Criss, Callum Murray

Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm. Introductions were conducted for the new AAC members.

Approval of the AAC minutes from April 19, 2011: Criss asked if there were any corrections or additions needed to the AAC meeting minutes from April 19, 2011. Hearing none, Jane Evans motioned to approve the minutes as written. Eddie Kuhlman seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Old Business: Criss referenced the letter dated April 20, 2011 from the County Executive to Lonnie Luther, President of the MCFB regarding tree trimming concerns. Criss suggested that if anyone experienced a situation where a tree needed to be trimmed for passage of farm equipment or to improve safety to please let him know by email and he would forward the request to the County DOT and he would track the work that needed to be done. Criss said this suggestion will help to demonstrate requests for tree trimming service and work completed. Eddie Kuhlman asked if both County and State roads should be included and Criss responded yes.

MCA-Agricultural Advisory Committee: David Weitzer said that he attended a meeting on May 4, 2011 at the Seneca Lodge at the request of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA). The MCA has formed a new Agricultural Advisory Committee to advise the MCA Board of Directors. David said that Doug Tregoning attended the meeting. Ann Sturm and Woody Woodroof also attended the meeting. David said that everyone was asked to introduce themselves and review their backgrounds and various groups that they serve on. Royce Hanson is the Chairman of the MCA-Agricultural Advisory Committee and Royce said they would meet about twice annually. An extensive conversation continued for an hour on the opportunities of having dialog and an exchange of views with the newly created MCA-Agricultural Advisory Committee that will advise the Board of Directors of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance. The conversation weighted both the pros and cons of the new committee as well as the potential confusion between the MCA-Agricultural Advisory Committee and the County Government Appointed-Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Farmland Preservation Update: Criss said that the first Building Lot Termination (BLT) easement purchase period runs until the end of May 2011. There are several applicants that have already applied and some additional applicants are pending. Once the period ends the DED staff will rank the applicants and forward recommendations to the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (APAB). If anyone has questions please contact John Zawitoski at 301 590-2831.

Update FY 2011-2012 Budget: The County Council approved on May 10, 2011 the FY 2012 Capital Improvement Program that DED administers for farmland preservation and this CIP provides funding for several agricultural staff and agricultural programs-Deer Donation, Montgomery Weed Control, and the UME state partnership. The DED-Operating budget for FY 2012 has not yet been scheduled with the County Council.

Commercial Residential-CR Zone: Criss referenced the May 17, 2011 letter from the AAC to the Council regarding ZTA 11-01 which involves the Commercial Residential (CR) zone. The ZTA proposes two new variations of the CR zone. The first one is the CRN (Commercial Residential Neighborhood) and the second is CRT (Commercial Residential Transit). Callum noted that the May 17, 2011 letter showed one of the variations incorrectly was listed as CRM when it should have been CRN. Callum said the PHED committee recommended to MNCPPC to remove the BLT requirement from the new variations of the CR zone. Jane Evans asked why the PHED made this recommendation to remove the BLT requirement. Callum said the level of incentive density for the BLT could range between 20,000 to 30,000 square feet of space that was considered too high for some of the neighborhoods that were originally proposed. Jane said the more the BLT program is applied to specific areas will mean more opportunities for using and purchasing BLT easements. Criss said that he needs to look into the discussion at the PHED committee to better understand their recommendation.

Discussion Surrounding Zoning Rewrite Process: Proposed ZTA to allow Alternative Energy Distribution Systems by zone:

The MNCPPC asked the DED to attend a meeting on April 26, 2011 with several representatives from the Solar Industry. The group discussed what would be needed to amend the zoning code to provide clarification for permitting solar generating energy systems. The County Executive has stated that he wants to move forward on a ZTA for alternative energy systems in the short run and not wait for Zoning Rewrite Process which is at least 2 years away from completion. The County Executive believes a ZTA can help to fulfill some of the recommendations of the Green Economy Task Force Report from March 2010. Criss said he is working with Ruppert Companies on a DPS permit to construct 40,000 square feet of free standing solar panels as an accessory structure to the farm. Criss said the size of the Ruppert Companies project was engineered based on their total electricity usage in 2010 to prevent generating more electricity than what they need. Woody said it was his understanding that if you generate more power than you use then you lose the difference.

Update on House Bill 209: Criss said the MDA and the MALPF Board of Trustees would like to explore a solution to the HB 209 that did not pass the 2011 session. A

meeting of MALPF program administrators is set for June 2, 2011 to consider other alternatives regarding child lots and unrestricted lot rights on MALPF easement properties. Linda Lewis asked a question as to whether the proposed changes will impact the County Agricultural Easement Program AEP. Criss said they are separate programs and the proposed changes to MALPF should not impact the County AEP program.

Update on the Horticultural Green Industry Work Group: Criss said that the DED is working with Steve Silverman on a draft ZTA that will allow some horticultural uses by right under certain conditions in the RDT zone. Callum wanted to clarify that the DED is drafting the ZTA and not the Work Group of which he is member. Criss agreed that DED is drafting the ZTA to present to the Work Group as part of their next meeting. Criss said that drafting this ZTA has become more complex when you consider the interrelationship between the definitions, the land uses and the various footnotes surrounding the horticultural land uses. Specifically Criss reference footnote number 1 which was authored by Bob Mangum-Bell Nurseries and it sets forth a procedure to allow a farm-horticultural nursery operation on two acres or 20 percent of the site which ever is less.

2011 Farmers Markets: There are a total of 20 farmers markets in Montgomery County and four of them are new this year. The growth of farmers markets is being driven by local communities wanting them and local communities willing to take on the responsibilities to organize then and recruit farmers. Criss referenced the farmers market flyer that lists all of the 20 markets including the contact person, the day, time and location of the market. The DED provides cost share funds support on Liability Insurance for the market location and promotion of the markets in newspapers and on-line advertising.

Upcoming Meeting and Events:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Next scheduled meeting of the AAC is June 21, 2011 @ 7:30 pm in Room B at the Upcounty Regional Services Center in Germantown.